

Benefits for Katrina's Unemployed

MONTGOMERY, Al. – Alabamians and displaced evacuees temporarily residing in the state who have lost their source of income due to Hurricane Katrina may be able to claim disaster-related unemployment benefits even if they would not normally be eligible for state unemployment compensation.

The benefits are funded through a 26-week Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Assistance (IA) program administered by the State of Alabama. Registration and compensation procedures are the same as the state unemployment program.

The Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program extends income compensation to self-employed people, farm workers and others who have lost income in a federally declared disaster.

While most applicants will be residents of declared disaster counties, the benefit is available to residents of any Alabama county as long as they lost income as a direct result of Hurricane Katrina. Displaced residents from Mississippi and Louisiana are eligible to apply in Alabama since FEMA program funding covers disaster-related unemployment in those neighboring states.

Individuals who lost employment due to Hurricane Katrina may be eligible for cleanup and restoration work in one of the ten Alabama counties now eligible for state/FEMA individual assistance. Residents of Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Greene, Hale, Mobile, Pickens, Sumter, Tuscaloosa, and Washington are urged to call the nearest career center. The toll-free career center locator is (877) US2-JOBS (877-872-5627) (877-889-5627 TTY).

Federal Coordinating Officer Ron Sherman said that the DUA program allows displaced residents to have their claims processed by neighboring states due to a high degree of regional cooperation and coordination. "Our state partners are instrumental in streamlining the flow of needed assistance to disaster victims in large-scale regional disasters," Sherman said.

"Replacing income will help begin to restore the lives of all those affected by major disasters like Hurricane Katrina," said State Coordinating Official Bruce Baughman. Baughman said applicants must document their pre-disaster employment and earnings. This can be done at any Alabama Workforce Development office. Anyone with questions about unemployment should call (800) 361-4524. Employers and jobseekers may also register online at the job search website:

<http://www.joblink.alabama.gov/>

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.